

EPA updates protections from pesticide drift for farmworkers, communities



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July 22, 2024 6 a.m.



FILE — In this June 21, 2019 file photo, the sun peaks past almonds growing on the branches of an almond tree in Modesto, Calif. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is changing how it handles pesticide spray drift, which can affect farmworkers and nearby communities.

Rich Pedroncelli / AP



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more closely weigh in on how pesticides that drift away from farm fields harm people. Environmental justice groups say the change is significant, but argue the federal government should've acted earlier.

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [announced](#) on Monday that it will analyze the potential for people to be exposed to a pesticide due to spray drift earlier in the agency's review process. The EPA already considers spray drift during routine reviews, but historically those reviews have happened 15 years after a pesticide was approved by the agency.

Now, federal officials will evaluate human health risks of pesticide spray drift during the initial registration or review process when a manufacturer identifies new crops or other uses of a pesticide. The goal is to minimize the potential for harm when a pesticide is first approved, rather than delaying it for 15 years.

“Our new policy will ensure that vital public health protections are in place when a pesticide is initially approved – so people don't have to wait years for the protections they deserve and need,” said Michal Freedhoff, assistant administrator for EPA's office of chemical safety and pollution prevention, in a statement.

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